
Figure 6.7. Lesson plan comparing results from searches using multiple search engines.

Popping the Filter Bubble**Standards**

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Rationale

To read and comprehend various kinds of texts (R.10), which include texts of diverse media (R.7), students must be able to make good choices about what they read online, beginning with how they find such texts. Because search engines often present a summary or the first few sentences from a website, it is important for students to be able to read those smaller sections and make informed inferences about the quality of those links (R.5). This lesson demonstrates the differences between various search engines and how their results are displayed, leading to questions about both how and why to conduct searches with various tools.

Goals

- Students will use multiple search engines to compare and contrast the top three results for two search terms.
- Students will reflect on their own Web searching practices, identifying ways they might change their search processes in the future.

Formative Assessment

- Students will complete the comparison of multiple search engines and reflect on their experiences. See the suggested outline for this assessment below.

Materials

- “Popping Our Online Filter Bubbles” handout—print or digital
- Eli Pariser’s 2011 TED talk: www.ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles.html
- Computers or e-devices
- Student notebooks/paper/e-devices for reflective writing

Lesson Plan

1. Writing prompt/opening discussion. Ask students to think about how they find texts to read online. One-word answers may ensue, such as Google, Yahoo, or Bing. Remind them of other Connected Reading practices in which they may also “encounter” a text besides searching: receiving, surfing, and stumbling.
2. Play Eli Pariser’s 2011 TED talk. If you are short on time, you might want to pause the video at about the six-minute mark (after he shows the slide for “information junkfood”).
3. Invite students to respond to the idea of what a “filter bubble” is and what it means by doing a quick-write on their handout. They may then “turn and talk” to one another, or you might initiate a brief whole-class discussion.
4. Using Google, DuckDuckGo, and Blekko, demonstrate a search for a common term and how the search results vary across different engines. (You may want to do a search of two or three different terms if time allows.) It is

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Figure 6.7. Continued

important that students understand that searching in the form of a question will not yield the same results as using a single term or one with a Boolean operator such as “and,” “or,” or “not.”

5. Invite students to search for two separate terms on their own and to complete the handout as they search. If writing down answers on a print version of the handout, ask them to retrieve just the top-level domain (e.g., Wikipedia.org). If using the digital handout, have them copy and paste the entire URL.
6. Lead a brief class discussion and ask students to share their search results. Note similarities and differences in how search terms yielded results.
 - a. What did you find similar or different in the results for your search terms in these different search engines compared to using Google, Yahoo, or Bing?
 - b. How does the way that these search results show up affect the way you might choose to click on and eventually read these websites?
 - c. How does the placement of advertisements affect the search results on these various sites?
7. Ask students to write a brief reflection on their handout using the writing prompts provided.

To extend this lesson, given adequate time, you might also invite students to explore blog search engines such as Technorati or Google Blog Search. Using these tools will show results only from blogs and not major websites. Work with students to discuss the difference between a corporate or organizational website and the work of an individual blogger, especially in reference to bias and fact versus opinion.